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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W DENNISON, AF/RSA HARPOLE AND AF/PDPA LISENBY

PARIS FOR AF WATCHER

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM SOCI KCOR KPAO NG

SUBJECT: GON releases jailed French Journalists

REF: 07 Niamey 1478

¶1. On January 18, the GON released two French journalists from pre-trial detention on bail of 10 million FCFA each (exchange rate currently 448 FCFA = 1\$US). Their bond was paid that same day and the two flew to Paris later that evening.

¶2. Journalists Thomas Dandois and Pierre Creisson of European TV station ARTE were arrested on December 17 for violating the terms of their media accreditation. Both entered Niger requesting to cover avian flu concerns in the southern Nigerien city of Maradi; however, they instead headed to northern Niger and were discovered by police with footage of MNJ rebels (reftel).

¶3. The two were jailed and later charged with violating state security. Their hearings started on January 16.

¶4. It is not clear at this time if/when the journalists will be required to return to Niger for trial. No trial date has been announced.

ALLEN